

Friends of the Desert Outdoor Center at Lake Pleasant Chuckwalla Chatter Newsletter

Friends of the Desert Outdoor Center Mission statement: To provide financial and volunteer support to the Desert Outdoor Center so that it may offer quality facilities and programs providing opportunities in a natural environment for education, recreation, and inspiration for all generations.



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Maricopa County



DOC Goes Primitive!

Most people picture primitive hunters with a bow and arrow but for thousands of years before bows ever existed, the atlatl and spear was the most dominant hunting system. Atlatls are wooden sticks about two feet in length. They function as a device allowing people to throw spears at much greater speeds and distances than by hand. Atlatls originated in Europe over 30,000 years ago during the Stone Age. They later spread to every corner of the Earth occupied by humans. This is the first true weapon developed by humans to hunt large animals.

Some scientists believe that this powerful weapon led to the extinction of the woolly mammoth. Atlatls are simple but effective hunting tools that placed humans on top of the prehistoric food chain. Students will have the opportunity to study ancient atlatl and spear technology at the Desert Outdoor Center in a class titled Primitive Living Skills. It is scheduled to begin in the spring of 2011 for students in grades 4 - 12. The class will emphasize history, parts, and physics of an atlatl. In a safe environment, students will use atlatls to throw six foot spears at bull's eye targets.



Happy Anniversary to Alice the Gopher Snake

The Desert Outdoor Center recently celebrated the 10th anniversary of Alice the gopher snake. Alice, has been featured in many educational programs. Alice was named after iconic rocker and Phoenix native Alice Cooper because of the similar eye markings Mr. Cooper wears during his performances.

Gopher snakes, also referred to as bull snakes, are one of the most widespread snakes in North America. Their range extends from the Atlantic to Pacific oceans and elevations range from sea level to over 9000 feet. Gopher snakes are non-venomous constrictor snakes which are commonly mistaken for rattlesnakes due to their defensive behaviors. When disturbed a gopher snake will rise to a striking position, flatten its head into a triangular shape, hiss loudly, and shake its tail at an intruder.

Alice celebrated his anniversary with a low key affair consisting of two medium sized rats. Alice is currently available for the Friends of the Desert Outdoor Center's "adopt an animal program." For additional information please contact Ranger Jenny @ 602-372-7470 ext.207.



Alice the Gopher Snake



Alice Cooper



Boy Scout Sailing Merit Badge

Every summer the Desert Outdoor Center turns into an aquatics and nature camp “bonanza” for boy scouts from all over the Phoenix Valley area. DOC rangers have a blast stepping away from our usual programming and get the opportunity to teach a wide variety of merit badges from Motorboating and Water Sports to Environmental Science and Insect Study. The summer of 2011 marked another successful camp season as attendance held strong with nearly 250 scouts visiting the Center and earning an estimated 500 merit badges. As this camp grows each year, we are constantly looking for ideas to improve our programs. We hope that for next summer we can add new opportunities, such as Bird Study and Mammals merit badges, as well as partnering with Ben Avery Shooting Facility to offer some shooting sports merit badges. With these new additions, we hope to entice returning scouts back to camp, in addition to those new scouts experiencing the camp for the first time. For more information, please visit www.grandcanyonbsa.com. Hope to see you next summer!

"Outdoor classrooms improve standardized test scores, critical thinking, and decision making."

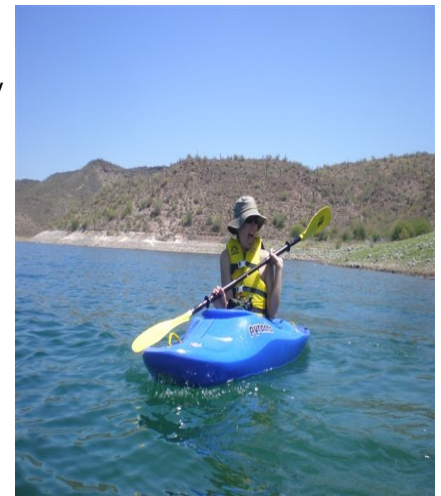
--Richard Louv, 'Last Child in the Woods'

Getting Wet at the DOC!

Seems like since 2006 when we installed the present boat dock off our shores in Honeymoon Cove, we've had an increasing amount of on-(and in)-the-water time. To date roughly 1,300 Boy Scouts have utilized the dock to earn aquatic merit badges during the aquatics summer camps. However, over the last year or so the DOC staff has targeted other groups to take advantage of the instructional opportunities at this structure.

A growing relationship with Cabela's to educate the public on the fun and techniques of paddling sports (canoes and mainly kayaks) has put 200 people on (and in) the water. "Ladies Day at the Lake" is a venture with the Lake Pleasant Sailing Club that has afforded introductory hands-on sailing instruction to 128 women. Another 100 folks have received kayaking and canoeing instruction in smaller groups, such as Boy Scout troops, Mountain Rescue training teams, and the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary.

When the State Parks Board afforded the County with funding in 2005 to install a dock in Honeymoon Cove, it was with the understanding that, in addition to the Boy Scouts, the general public would have access to training opportunities at this facility. In 2012, we plan to increase the chance for public education at this dock with the relationships we have, and to develop new relationships and programs to insure more and more people get wet at our dock!



Ladies Day at Lake Pleasant

Investigating Owl Pellets

The Desert Outdoor Center has added a new evening program. Investigating Owl Pellets, gives participants a chance to dissect real owl pellets and document their findings. The objectives of the program are to offer a better understanding of predator/prey relationships, allow inferences and predictions about the types of food and material that are consumed by owls, and to encourage critical thinking about why scientists may use owl pellets to examine the biology and characteristics of an owl. For more information on this program, contact Ranger John @ 602-372-7470 ext.212.



New Archery Program at the DOC

Ready, Aim, Shoot – Bull's Eye! The Desert Outdoor Center is now offering a fun, hands-on archery program. The program will introduce prospective archers to the sport of international style target archery. Archers follow the 11 Steps to Archery Success as they operate their bow and shoot an arrow. These steps safely guide archers through form, execution, and reflection of each shot. This program is for every student whether they are a beginner or on their way to becoming a professional. Students in 4th grade and above may participate in this program. **All instructors are certified through the National Archery in the Schools Program. Nearly \$5000 worth of archery equipment has been provided by the Arizona Game and Fish Department.** There is a 60 student maximum for half day visits and an 80 student maximum for full day visits. For more information, please contact Ranger Adam @ 602-372-7470 ext.208.